

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

February 2006

FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

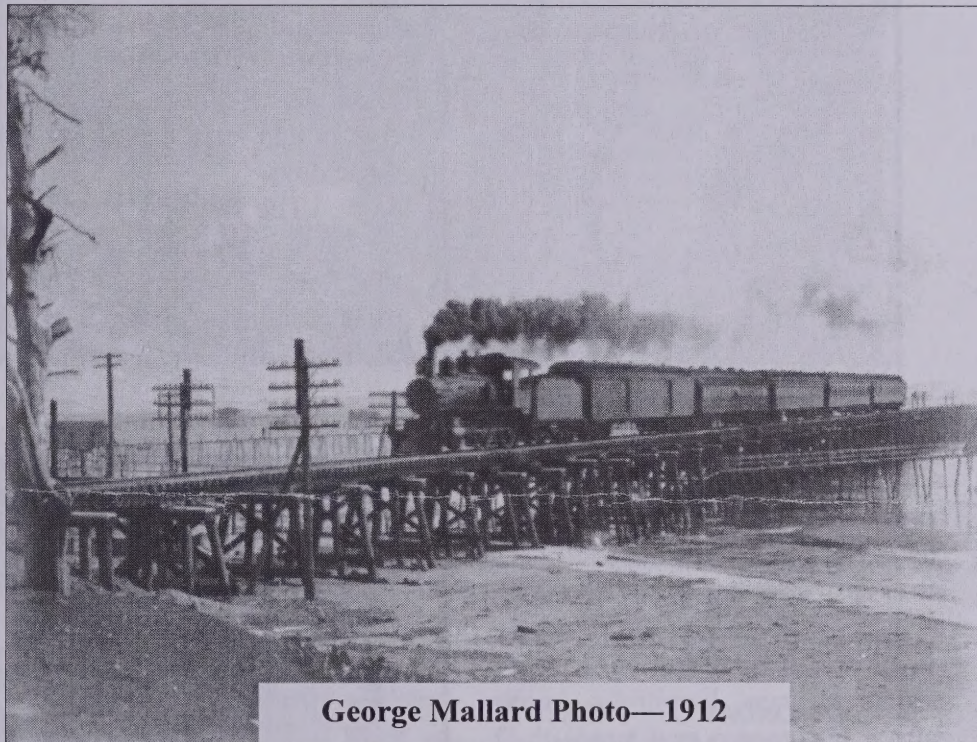
The February luncheon will be held at the Loblano House, 108 Cue Street in Bay St. Louis, on Thursday, February 16th. Architect, John Anderson will be the guest speaker. His program will be on the rebuilding plans for Bay St. Louis and Waveland after Katrina.

The cost of the luncheon is \$7.00, payable at the door. Please call for reservations as seating is limited. (467-4090)

Many of you have mailed in your dues and we thank you for your continuous support. An envelope is enclosed with this month's newsletter for the convenience of those of you who have not paid yet.

New officers for 2006 are as follows: President: Melinda Richard; 1st Vice President: Doris Muniz; 2nd Vice President: Mary Perkins; Secretary: Zita Waller; Treasurer: Ruth Thompson; Publicity: Lil Stahler; Historian: Ellis Cuevas; Membership: Jerry Zimmerman. They will be installed at the luncheon.

At the February board meeting plans were discussed to have a "clean-up" day for the yard at the Loblano House sometime in March. If you would like to volunteer, please let us know.



George Mallard Photo—1912

I never thought I would miss the sound of the trains passing through the Bay. When I first moved back to Bay St. Louis, I lived across from the depot. The first night my husband and I were awakened, not only by the wailing of the train, but by the sound of pictures falling from the walls. I thought, "I'll never get used to this!" But I did. When we moved to Main Street it was much better. The sounds were in the distance and not quite so loud. Then came Katrina and there were no whistles at all. I missed it. Something was missing. On February 1, 2006, that changed. The trains were back, blowing their whistles as they made their way across the bridge.

Life was getting back to normal.
Dale St. Amant

The Beginning

The railroad has played an important role in the growth and development of the Mississippi Gulf Coast; however, even though *The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* reported in 1839 that the railroad was coming to this region, South Mississippi would not see locomotives for thirty-one more years after Charles Chadwick of Waveland, drove the golden spike into the rail at Chef Menteur Pass on October 29, 1870. The railroad

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Editor - Dale St. Amant

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**HANCOCK COUNTY
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**LOBRANO HOUSE
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MONDAY — FRIDAY
 10:00AM — 3:00PM

Closed from 12:00—1:00 .

MISSION STATEMENT

"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

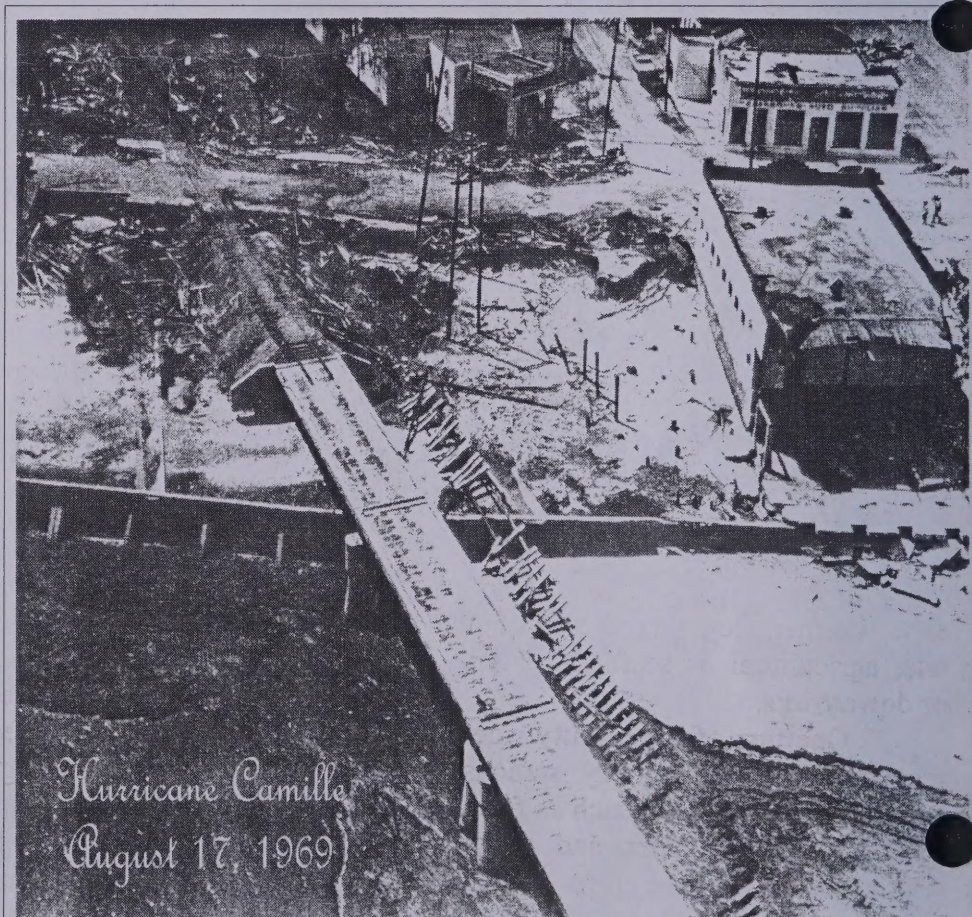
was known as New Orleans, Mobile & Chattanooga

The line ran 140 miles between the two cities (New Orleans, Mobile) and when it began carrying passengers and freight on November 21, 1870, it made obsolete the 18-hour trip by inter-coastal steamer. Without fully realizing it, the rail line started a price war with the steamboats, which dropped their New Orleans-Coast rate from \$8.00 to \$2.00. The trains made the trip in five hours, an unheard of speed in those days.

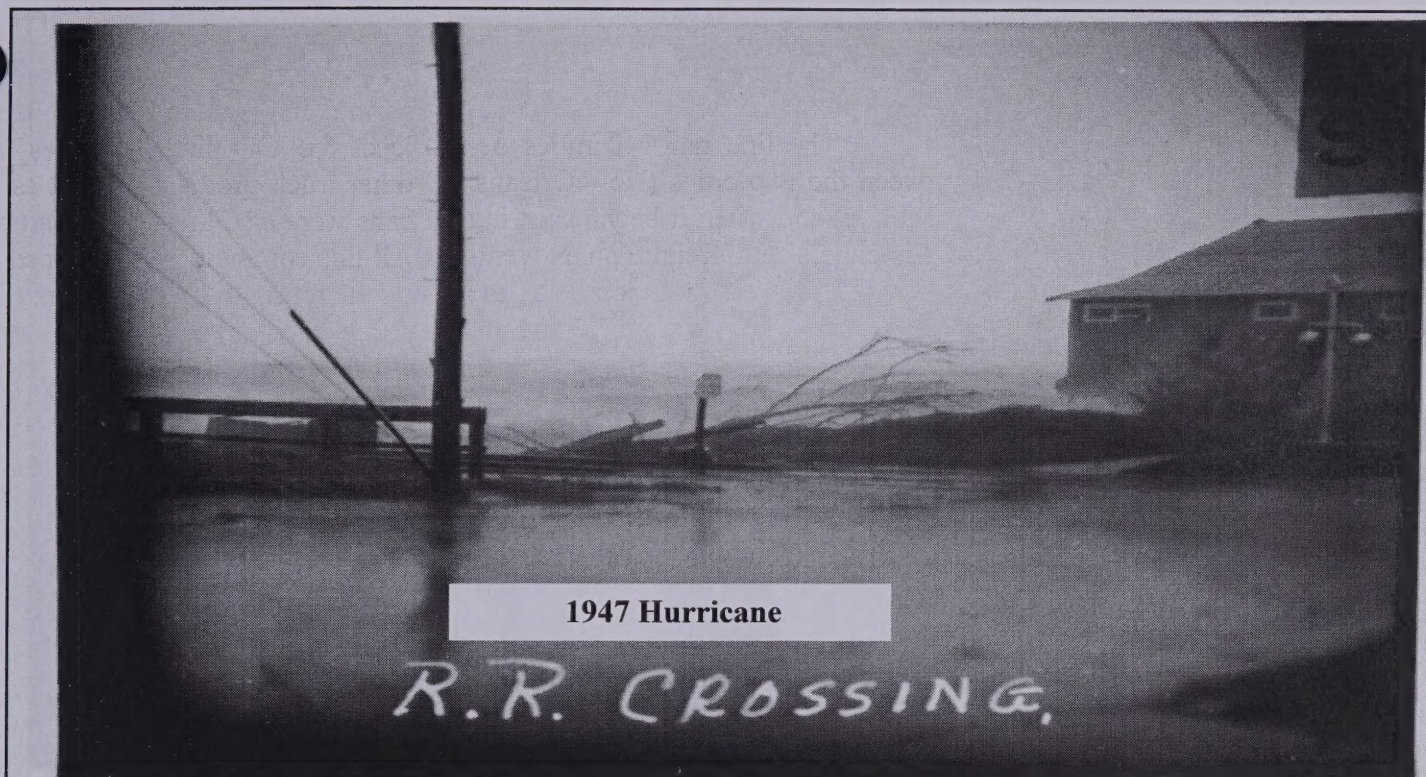
The railroad provided work for the impoverished Reconstruction South. Former slaves, Irish immigrants and others worked hard for their pay. In the early years, yellow

pine was felled for export lumber. Shrimp and oysters were canned or iced for shipping, radishes and other truck produce as well as pecans were also grown and shipped. All this commerce was shipped out on the rails to a nationwide market. After completing their job, some liked the Coast so well they stayed and made it their home.

From 1870 to 1970 trains stopped daily between Waveland, and Pascagoula. It was a way of life for nearly a century. Passenger and freight trains daily chugged in and out of the Coast, and though the freight trains remained steady, the passenger service was discontinued by 1970, when it fell victim to Interstates and air travel.



*Hurricane Camille
 August 17, 1969*



1947 Hurricane

R.R. CROSSING.

Before the railroad, steamboats had been popular because it took several days by horseback, across the swamps and around bays, to get to the Coast from New Orleans. But the railroad's bridging of the marshes was a great engineering marvel.

The north-south rails that headed upstate weren't completed until the late 1890's. First called the Gulf & Ship Island, they opened up the piney woods to yellow pine exports and created the port of Gulfport.

The train stations dotting the coastline were undisputed social centers, whether they served large hotels, agricultural or seafood centers or downtowns.

One turn-of-the century rider recalled: "All the railway stations had people selling food such as fresh fried fish and oysters and sandwiches, soft shell fried crabs, stuffed crabs and pecan pie, and they did a

fine business, serving people through the train windows as it stopped for a couple of minutes at all the small towns."

(*The Sun Herald*, Kat Bergeron, staff writer; Sunday, March 28, 1993.)

At the same time faster, safer passenger trains brought in more people than had ever arrived by the steamboats. People traveled from New Orleans to relax, fish, hunt, play in the sun, or gamble illegally but openly.

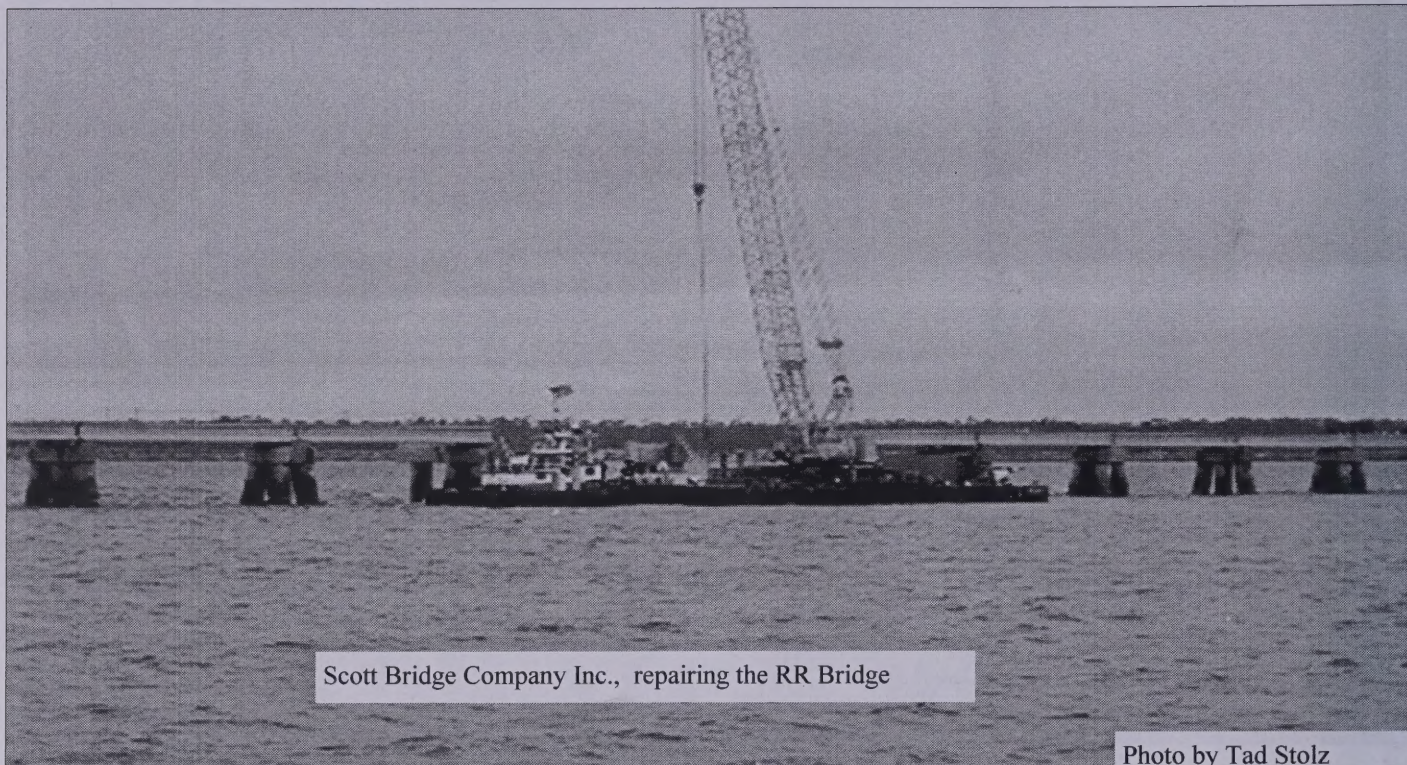
Many stayed at local hotels or boarding houses along the Beach Boulevard in Bay St. Louis as well as other resorts along the coast. Husbands commuted to the city to work while children commuted to attend school. Locals traveled to New Orleans for shopping or Mardi Gras.

In the mid 1870's, the N.O. M. & C. joined forces with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad

to provide through service between the Gulf Coast and the Ohio Valley. The L. & N. later leased the entire N.O.M. & C. line (Echo, 1977, 4B) and operated it as a division of the Railroad.

The importance of developing additional service to the Gulf Coast was recognized by the railroad. An advertisement in the *Daily Picayune* of May 12, 1878, announced the addition of the Coast Accommodation, New Orleans to Ocean Springs, leaving New Orleans at 3:30P.M., and returning daily, except Sunday, at 9:45A.M. In more recent years, the Coast Accommodation, or "Coast Train," as it was affectionately known, was called the "Commuter Train."

Round trip tickets cost \$1.00. In the same year a \$1.00 excursion to Mississippi City was planned on a Saturday when a yacht race was being held. Later



Scott Bridge Company Inc., repairing the RR Bridge

Photo by Tad Stolz

they added a Sunday excursion, which continued until World War I. The regular excursion train had three stops, Bay St. Louis, Beauvoir, and Pascagoula.

In 1880 the L&N purchased the N.O.M. & C. outright. (Echo, 1977, 4B) In 1882, the L&N changed its rails from narrow gauge to standard gauge. All the rails from New Orleans to Mobile were changed in one day. (Caire and Caire, 1976).

In 1884, the railroad made a new record on the run from New Orleans to Mobile. It did this to dramatize the improvement in its roadbed and rolling stock, and to promote the development of the Gulf Coast. The train made the 141-mile run, station-to-station, in three hours and nineteen minutes, not counting stops for sightseeing purposes (Echo, 1958, 4D).

There were three stops: at Bay St. Louis, Beauvoir, and Pasca-

goula. The train, a three car special, made the 52-mile run to Bay St. Louis, in one hour and six minutes. From Pass Christian to Mississippi, it averaged 58 miles an hour. (*Daily Picayune*, April 1, 1884).

Building the Railroad

The New Orleans, Mobile, and Chattanooga Railroad was financed by a group of investors from New York. Chief Construction Engineer, Henry Van Vleck, who previously had surveyed the entire line, announced that the road would cost \$3,500,000 a figure that was to double before the line was actually completed.

Van Vleck contracted for the line to be built in 31 sections, each approximately five miles in length. In the marshy areas, dredges cut parallel

ditches roughly 100 feet apart and filled in between them with sand and soil. Wood pilings were driven through these fills in order to stabilize the roadbed. By the end of 1869 over 80 miles of track had been finished, most of it between Mobile, Pascagoula and Bay St. Louis.

Included in the construction plans were more than seven miles of bridges and trestles. Railroad engineers went out into the surrounding forests and cut long, solid poles of yellow pine, red and black cypress for pilings to use in the trestle work, and sawmills at Pearl River, Gainesville, and Mississippi City, turned out nearly a half million crossties.

The railroad didn't have to blast its way through mountains, but problems caused by Mother Nature were just as serious; other than the periodic hurricane, the *teredo navalis* or better known as

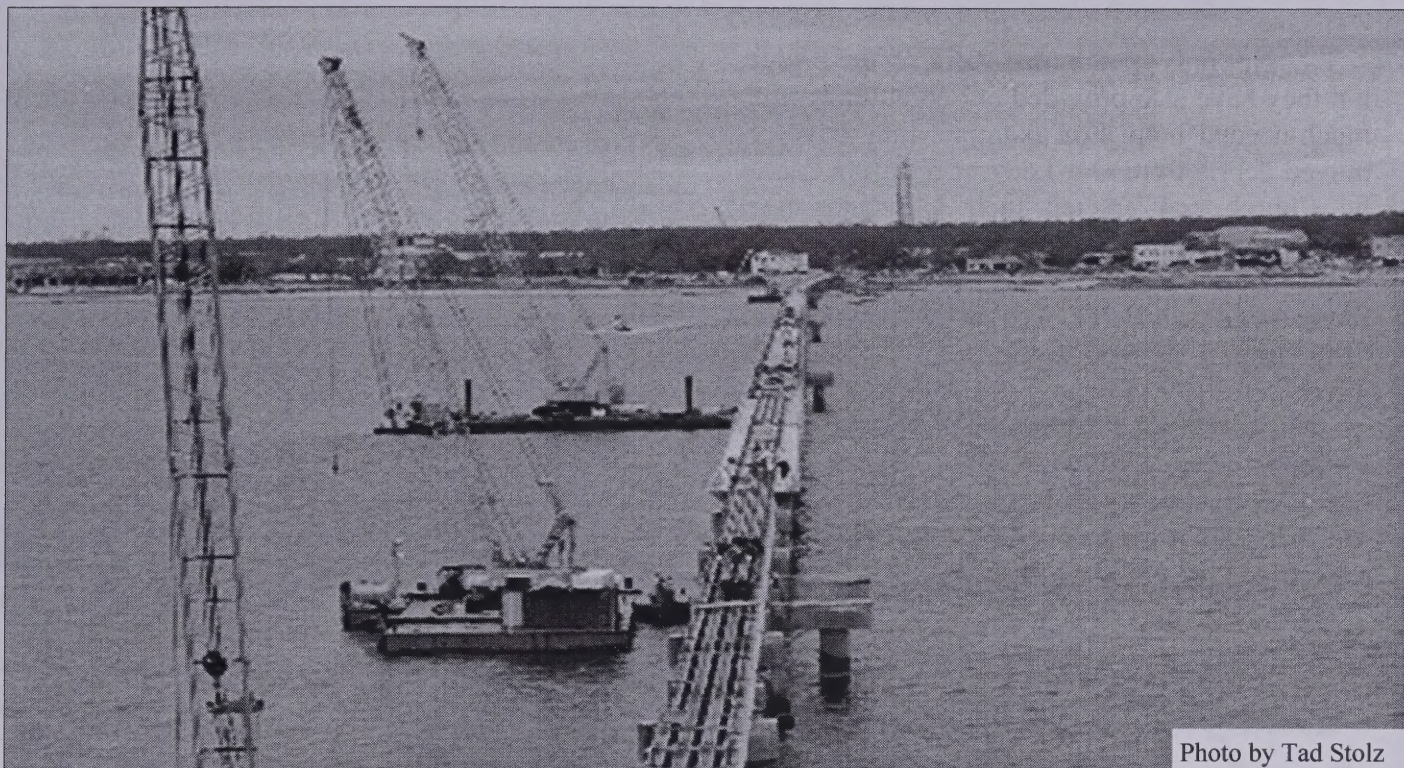


Photo by Tad Stolz

The shipworm was the most destructive force. These mollusks ate their way into wood for long distances, boring holes the diameter of their bodies, until in a few months the strength of the wood was destroyed. The pilings had to be worked on or replaced continuously.

It continued to be a problem until a Britisher, Dr. Bethell, discovered a new process of treating the timbers where the timber was saturated with bituminous material containing creosote. The process coagulated the sap, protecting the fibers from moisture.

In order to provide treated pilings and crossties in numbers sufficient for the railroad's needs, a plant was set up on the west bank of the Pascagoula River, now Gautier. The railroad became nationally known for its perfection of the creosoting process.

2005-6 After Katrina

Today we do not have to worry about the *teredo navalis*, but Mother Nature still visits the coast; the hurricane of '47, Betsy, Camille and Katrina, just to name the most recent. Each time the wrath of the storms played havoc with the train bridge across the Bay of St. Louis.

A week before August 29th, Scott Bridge Company, Inc. was notified by our city to be on standby. Hurricane Katrina was headed in our direction and they wanted to be prepared. The very next day after the storm, Project Manager Billy Baughman set up his construction site at the end of Washington Street with his crew of 40 men. He also hired about 60 local residents to work on the reconstruction of the bridge. The company subcontracted to another com-

pany to start on the south side. The plan was to meet in the middle at the drawbridge. February 1, 2006, the first train crossed the bridge since Katrina's visit. Two crews working night and day had accomplished this feat.

The substructure (concrete shell pilings) had been damaged slightly but was reparable. The pre-cast concrete spans used before the hurricane were replaced with concrete girder spans (four concrete beams with a concrete deck poured on top).

The crew had to repair a local motel so they would have a place to live while working on the bridge, even providing it with a generator before the electricity was restored. Scott Bridge Company serves the men their breakfast each morning at 6:00 before they go out on the water. Lunch is taken out to the workers, and dinner is served in the evening.

Not only do the men work on the bridge, but they have also provided our community with much-needed help. For example, they have removed debris from Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church and erected their Christmas tree. They have used their heavy equipment to remove debris from property near Washington Street and Beach Drive. And they are helping the county repair the jetty at the end of Washington Street.

Scott Bridge Company Inc., has also contracted to repair five or six other bridges and/or trestles between Bay St. Louis and New Orleans. We thank them for helping Bay St. Louis on its road to recovery.

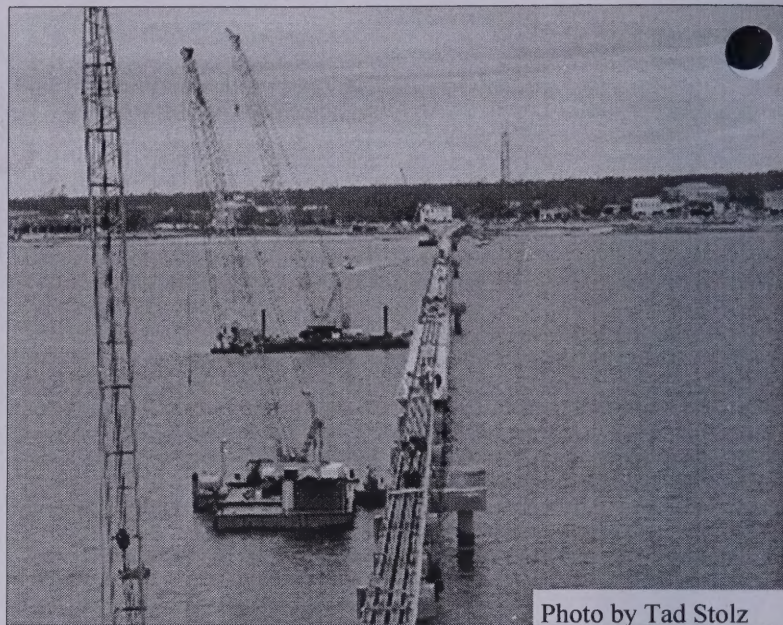
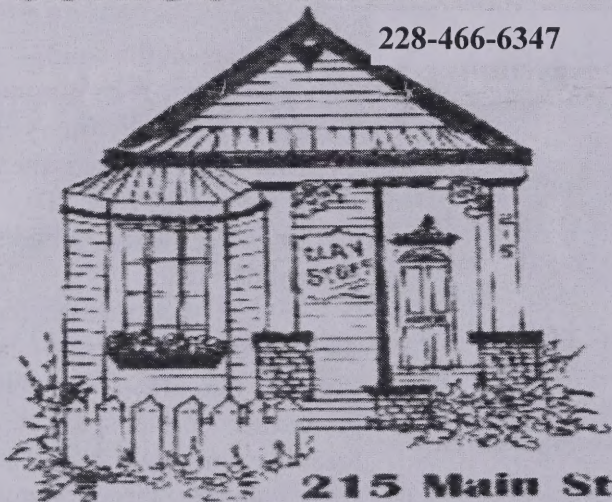


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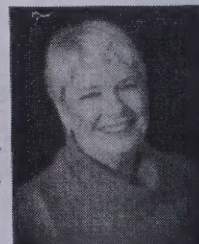
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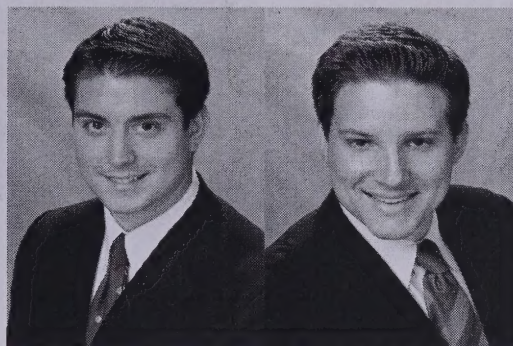
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"As a Senior, I'm more concerned about the return OF my principal rather than return ON my principal.." Will Rogers



Micah Keel Robert Padilla

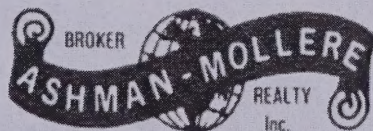
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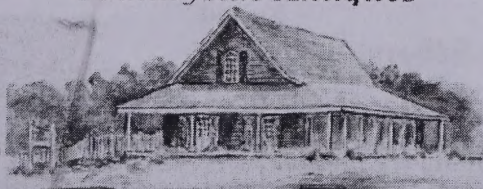
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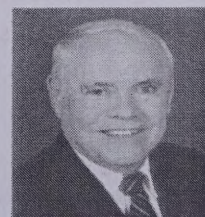
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